DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 361 449 UD 029 461

AUTHOR	Cohen, Marvin
TITLE	Patterns of School Change.
PUB DATE	16 Apr 93
NOTE	23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Atlanta, GA, April 12-16, 1993).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Asian Americans; Black Students; Change Agents; *Change Strategies; Collegiality; Economically Disadvantaged; *Educational Change; Hispanic Americans; Instructional Innovation; Junior High Schools; Junior High School Students; *Minority Group Children; Principals; *School Restructuring; Secondary School Teachers; Staff Development; *Urban Schools; Urban Youth
IDENTIFIERS	Bank Street College of Education NY; Media Education; *New York City Board of Education; *Reform Efforts; Teacher Empowerment

ABSTRACT

An examination was done of school reform efforts supported by Bank Street College of Education's Center for Minority Achievement in two urban junior high schools in New York City. One school was a traditional junior high school with majority minority enrollment with most teachers using traditional techniques. The other school, the Media Arts School, was under pressure to change or dissolve due to declining enrollment. In this school, a group of teachers formed around a leader who wanted to develop an Active Learning Academy mini-school for 7th graders. The Bank Street College assistance at both schools took the form of obtaining additional meeting time to enable teachers to meet regularly to discuss teaching, change, and innovation. These opportunities to work together allowed people to define goals and become colleagues. The following six patterns of change emerged: (1) school leadership is committed to teacher empowerment; (2) student membership in the school is important; (3) voluntary teacher membership is essential; (4) attention to professional growth is necessary; (5) successful teams became colleagues; and (6) even when there is real empowerment, it may not have immediate credibility. The evaluation suggests that the locus of long-lasting change is the mini-school, not the building. (Contains 7 references.) (JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 361 449

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M. J Cohen
Bank Street College of Education
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Patterns of School Change

Marvin Cohen
Center for Minority Achievement, Bank Street College

Paper presented at the Annual AERA conference held in Atlanta, Georgia from April 12-April 16, 1993.

The author would like to acknowledge grants received from the following companies: Con Edison Incorporated, The Gilder Foundation, The New York Times Foundation, Philip Morris Corporation, Schlumberger Corporation and Time Warner Incorporated.

Running Head: SCHOOL CHANGE

UD029461

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

This paper looks at school reform efforts supported by Bank Street College's Center for Minority Achievement in two urban junior high schools in New York City. Six patterns of change are identified in the paper. They are:

(a) School leadership is committed to teacher empowerment;
(b) Student membership in the school is important;
(c) Voluntary teacher membership is essential;
(d) Attention to professional growth is necessary;
(e) Successful teams became colleagues; and
(f) Even when there is real empowerment, it may not have immediate credibility.

The paper concludes by noting that for change to be long lasting, it will take time and take various forms. This variety suggests that the locus of change is therefore the mini-school, not the building.

Introduction

Bank Street's Center for Minority Achievement (CMA) was founded on the premise that high school is too late to address the dropout problem. Established to improve schools that serve children from low socio-economic backgrounds and to provide the field-based experience necessary for Bank Street's graduate degree program in early adolescence, the Center collaborates with middle and junior high school teachers and administrators in schools where the minority student population exceeds 95%.

To achieve these reform-based goals, the Center works with school-based teams to examine teaching, learning, and major structural issues that stand in the way of improving schools. Rather than bringing school staff a set of solutions or activities, Center staff plan collaboratively on-site with administrators and teachers. These meetings provide a forum for teachers to improve and design successful collaborative programs for pre-adolescents.

The Center begins its work with teams of teachers who wish to rethink their goals, and improve their practice. We bring a child-centered perspective to dealing with early adolescents and the schools they attend. We have found that teachers, given the time to talk, can learn from each other, redefine their own professional goals, and design the professional development necessary to achieve these goals.

In lieu of a packaged program, we insist on minimal blocks of time to do our work with teachers. Our time together, a minimum of an hour and a half each week with a team during the school day, is spent in meetings where children and the programs that serve them best are discussed, defined and reviewed. Additional needs for time are usually met at lunch, 8 A.M., or after school. As part of this process, teachers may visit each others' classrooms or other schools, attend conferences, and meet with parents to discuss ways to support their children. As facilitators of these meetings, Center staff are able to provide new information for teachers to consider. This new information enhances teachers' knowledge and experience, promoting discussion and the development of more effective programs using the resources of the school and the College.

Three areas have been the focus of CMA's school reform efforts -- leadership, structure, and curriculum and instruction. Each is discussed below.

Leadership

The development of teacher leadership is an important aspect of our work. Teachers are supported and encouraged to assume leadership responsibilities. Together, teachers usually move toward assuming responsibility for collaboratively defined goals in areas that have traditionally been outside the domain of the teacher. The areas discussed might include scheduling, retention policies, parental involvement, budgeting, staffing, and redefining curriculum as well as the traditional responsibilities of the classroom.

Structure

The need for a different, smaller organizational unit has become critical in schools that have 800-1400 children. The teachers seek to define a unit where they can control more of the variables and eliminate the anonymity of these large schools. Children come to realize that all their teachers know and care about them.

This usually leads to planning and establishing a school within a school i.e. a "mini-school". This new unit is a first step toward increasing the degree of autonomy for teachers and providing them with the opportunity to focus their efforts on a common group of children. Often teachers select a theme around which they will begin to approach curriculum.

Curriculum and Instruction

Restructuring is only a vehicle for the kind of instructional and curricular change that can improve the lives of children. We therefore provide opportunities for staff development based on teachers' needs and interests.

Instruction is often the area of greatest resistance. It requires teachers to rethink practices that they have been engaging in for many years. These practices may have once been successful, but no longer meet the needs of a world driven by the

interpretation of information and the development of new knowledge, rather than a world based on a factory model. In this new world, children must learn to work collaboratively and become creators of knowledge rather than just users of existing knowledge. This often requires teachers to relearn and rethink curriculum. Our goal therefore, is to engage teachers in a process of relearning that will allow them to become lifelong learners, continuing their growth after we have ended our formal work together.

Over the years, the Center has worked in a variety of ways in seven middle and junior high schools. The Center is currently working with five mini-schools is in two junior high schools. The various activities include: (a) teacher meetings, (b) workshops, (c) intervisitations, (d) Teacher Incentive Grants (TIG's), (e) luncheons, (f) brokered services, and (g) mentoring of principals. These are described elsewhere in more depth in an earlier article (Cohen, in press).

Two schools

This article will focus on the Center's work in two schools in the same district. Both schools faced pressure from the outside world to improve. "Schools of choice" was gaining favor as a policy and the papers were filled daily with the inability of schools to meet the challenges of industry. Comparisons with other nations and national reports said our schools were failing.

The work in J 1.5 began at the request of the superintendent. It began with informal lunch meetings and about ten volunteers. In April of the first year of these meetings, the principal selected two of these volunteers to participate in a retreat with CMA teachers from other schools. They recommended to the principal that grade seven be restructured into three mini-schools. The principal agreed and selected teams that would each teach the same group of 120 children. The teachers were told in September that they had a year to plan a mini-school for the following September. Neither of the original teachers participated. There were no volunteers. The leaders were told they were selected because of their strong teaching abilities. They were told that based on their work together it would be determined if they would become a minischool. Two of the three teams became mini-schools. The third team collapsed. The math teacher from

this group replaced a math teacher on another team who wanted out. All of these decisions were made administratively by the principal.

J 1.5 was a traditional junior high school when the Center began its work. Most teachers taught from the front of the room. Class size was over 30 and students generally did the same work from textbooks. The computer room was used to teach keyboarding and the science lab and equipment was locked up. Many of the teachers had been there over 20 years. The staff was about 80% white and about 20 percent nonwhite. The students were 80% Hispanic, 15% African-American, and 5% Asian.

Weick (in Baldridge & Deal, 1973) would describe the organization as loosely coupled with a weak authority system. Elements of control were decoupled from instruction. Teachers were able to go into their classrooms, close the door, and do what they wanted as long as there was order. Though there was pride in specific programs, there was no systematic support for innovation and quality improvement. Though most teachers appeared to make real efforts at teaching, they felt the sociology of the children (i.e. drugs, AIDS, broken homes and poverty), resulted in an impossible teaching situation. Students traveled from class to class and were too often anonymous to their teachers. One teacher invited me in one day for help with discipline. A student looked up at her as she entered and asked "Know my name yet?" It was mid-October.

Teachers spoke to each other informally based on specific needs. Mr. J regularly solicited other teachers to identify the "best children" for the debate team, but professional dialogue occurred mainly on an as-needed basis. Staff meetings focused on procedural concerns.

The principal was something of a maverick about getting things done for the school. To the chagrin of the district office, he had protested directly and publicly to the New York City Board of Education over matters like heat and repairs for his building. He was two years from retirement but maintained an energy about his work and strong concern for the children. He was well liked by the staff. He welcomed our involvement in the school although he moved cautiously. He felt his decisions were based on staff wishes although he made them based on discussions with limited and selective members of the staff. He was sensitive to

his staff's interests, but equally sensitive to the wishes of the district office. Action was often the result of political pressure, but he felt that political decisions served the school best.

During the planning year, there were no room or scheduling changes made. He felt the teachers would protest and he needed their cooperation. That year there was a policy resolution from the community school board that all junior high schools should reorganize into smaller units. Mr. P., the principal, was a year ahead of the resolution. He applied for a large grant to support further restructuring, and was a finalist. The school lost because there was little or no parent participation in the process. He actively supported all the work we did with teachers through scheduling, but had no stated vision for the school.

The staff at J 1.5 had a real sense of pride in their programs and the school's history. There was a unique ham radio program that had been recognized numerous times in the press, a debate team that had won district and city wide honors over the years and curriculum projects that had been shared around the district and in Albany. Although most of these activities were a function of individual teachers, there was a glory that the staff shared.

The principal and teachers also told stories of gangs and fights but they were victory stories. J 1.5 had its share of drug problems and fights but they were not a way of life. The building was basically safe. Law and order were the prevailing concerns and knowledge was something teachers had "to give the children."

The subject of this paper is our work with the Media Arts School, the most successful of the three mini-schools we worked with at J 1.5 and the Active Learning Academy at J 2.5. Our work at Media Arts School had lead to a referral to J 2.5 by Mr. P. The principal there was under pressure to restructure but had been unsuccessful at moving a committee of about 12 staff beyond initial discussions. It was a school that, in recent years, had gone from over 800 children to 450 that September. We were invited to meet with them in June 1990 to determine if we might work together the following year. The staff's experience waned with many having under ten years experience. Their leader was smart and well organized. We agreed to help them plan the next school year. The

principal appeared to be supportive. He agreed to make time for teachers to meet together in the school day.

Over the summer, the strong leader left to begin a family. Another teacher took over the responsibilities. We worked with the group that year to plan a new seventh grade mini-school. External pressures on the school grew. There was a new superintendent whose agenda was creating "schools of choice." He was looking for space in underutilized buildings like J 2.5 to place new autonomous programs. This increased pressures on schools like J 2.5 with shrinking enrollment. In March of that year, another teacher at J 2.5 came forward with a program that would focus on the needs of early adolescents. He felt by creating such a program he could attract more students to the school and protect it from closing. He had a lot of energy and understood the need for early adolescents to be doing and working together as part of their learning. He also wanted to change the traditional curriculum and offer courses that would teach the required skills through content that would be both interesting and involving to the children. He had a vision he was passionate about. The Assistant Principal helped him recruit a small group of others that were to become the second team at J 2.5, the Active Learning Academy.

The Active Learning Academy was selected because it took on many of the biggest challenges of school reform. Curriculum and students' academic and social experiences were at the top of their agenda. Their goal was to be exciting and in the words of their team leader, "life changing." There were broad degrees of freedom. They redesigned their report card to reflect the change in their course of study. Some of the new titles included "Adolescence: Life and Literature; Science, Health and Society; and Engineering and Architecture. Class periods remained at 42 minutes, but double periods were built in for engineering, Active Learning periods, and student internships as they became part of the program. There were also student advisory groups held weekly. Teachers participated because "It was a chance to do something different," one teacher explained. "It was an opportunity to do something new and creative," said another. A third teacher wanted out of her administrative position.

During the planning year, the school functioned as a traditional urban junior high school. Teachers worked independently of each other and the principal,

assistant principal, and a dean spent their days preoccupied with hall patrols and order. Reading scores were at about the 25th percentile (25% of the children reading at or above grade level) and instruction was overwhelmingly frontal. Student failures were again felt to be a function of sociological factors although at J 2.5 the teachers also felt the need for increased resources. They felt they had been successful, using a "mastery" program that included funded afterschool and summer work with children when they failed to achieve 80% mastery. With the City's budget cuts these supports for the mastery program were eliminated making it unworkable and making job security an annual issue. The teachers felt external forces made success unlikely.

At J 2.5 the staff we worked with had a broad range of experience (6-32 years). They often spoke of the pressures of shrinking enrollment and its effect on job security. If teachers could, they found jobs in other schools, thus somewhat alleviating the insecurity of shrinking enrollment on the rest of the staff. They had formed a schoolwide committee to attempt changes, but it was deadlocked. Materials were scarce and their memories were dominated by unkept promises from the district and the principal. They worked individually in ways that allowed them to get through the day. The "Active Learning Academy" was different. The team's leadership harnessed the energy and vision that each of these teachers had when they chose to become teachers. They could not ignore the context in which they existed, but they took the presence of Bank Street and the changes in policy to be an opportunity to make things better for themselves and children. They wanted to "save J 2.5". They used their meetings to move beyond individual survival to the creation of a community with shared values.

Changes

In both schools, the planning year included weekly time in the day to work together. At the Center we view this as a time for people to define goals and become colleagues. The goal definition, deciding the work they wanted to do together, proceeded differently in each place.

At the Media Arts School, they talked about children who were giving them problems. They ventilated and discussed what they might do in a minischool, trips that might bring the children together, and possible use of the Center's

Teacher Incentive Grants (TIG), and how they might get children to feel part of the minischool. They felt strongly that the biggest problem facing the entering seventh grader was the anonymity experienced in moving from the self-contained sixth grade classroom to the larger school with several teachers who were teaching as many as 150 different children in 42 minute periods.

They therefore focused on the socialization of the children. They created a handbook for their mini-school that included a welcome and an orientation. This was appended to the J 1.5 handbook each child received. A visit to another successful CMA school (IS 9.5) using 55 minute periods and heterogeneously grouped children challenged them to try the same. Their problem was a desire to interact with the rest of the building for specialists (art, music and gym). The principal helped them schedule 55 minute periods in the mornings and 42 minute periods in the afternoons for specials. The result was to dramatically cut down on the kids "getting lost" in crowded halls between classes.

Interdisciplinary curriculum never received much attention. They discussed taking two interdisciplinary trips with all the children during the planning year, but neither ever happened. Instead, they supported the science teacher in planning and executing a curriculum related trip. They agreed to group the children heterogeneously though the groups never really came out that way. They focused on policies and structures that would better socialize the children, give them a sense of belonging to the mini-school and hopefully alleviate some of the discipline problems they were experiencing. Children were frequently the topic at their meetings, though the conversation usually focused on behavior or performance rather than on how children learn. Curriculum was not seen as a tool in these efforts. Instruction was put off to the second year of work together.

They were clear in the need to be different, but they felt they needed to begin with children's social "incorporation into the school's discipline and routines". That first year of implementation included a number of social events, eventually run by the children and parents. With training from a local community based organization and support from the Center, they also piloted a weekly advisory program of nonacademic meetings of teachers with children. School socials helped to integrate the children while they worked at making parent meetings

less threatening. They included positive comments about the children at these meetings and were appreciative of the parents' presence in the school.

In the middle of the first year as a mini-school, they faced another major academic policy issue. There were about 12 children who were potential holdovers unless they dramatically improved their academic performance. We discussed what the literature said about the effect of "holding over." They wanted to promote, but only if the children could be successful. They therefore designed a program that included afterschool support, a parent sign-off, independent summer work, and continued support in the fall. Ten children participated with eight being successfully promoted. The other two decided to transfer out of the mini-school.

Another important decision began to bring the academic and the social concerns together when they began planning their third year. No one had said whether they would move up with their children to ninth grade or take on a new seventh grade. Budget cuts were going to result in increased class sizes and teaching ninth grade meant more lesson preparation time for teachers. They looked to IS 9.5 again and found that teachers there who moved up with their kids knew the children better and had fewer discipline problems. Their experience thus far had been good. They decided they wanted to move up with the children. The principal respected their decision and made it happen.

In the second year we, the Center staff, felt that there was a need for professional development to support curricular change and involvement in authentic work. We chose math and science as our focus because of their importance in determining children's future academic careers. We offered monthly workshops in each, available to all District teachers, with individual planning and follow-up available to teachers collaborating with the Center who wanted further support. The math and science teachers in both the Media Arts School and the Active Learning Academy participated in the workshops and the follow-up.

During the second year, they began to address their theme, media arts. They wanted to move learning out of the textbook. The principal allowed them to schedule more trips with fewer restrictions. They went to the Planetarium, the Museum of the Moving Image and the New York Hall of Science. Each was dealt

with as they related to communication in its various forms. They published a quarterly newspaper and a literary magazine. But in the words of the current leader it was ... "superficial... just a start. There was no real connection between the teachers in the follow-up to these activities." The "outside learning" was not connected to what was going on in the classroom. When asked why they didn't get more involved in coordination of curriculum one teacher reveals, "no one thought of it". He goes on, "It was only mentioned in passing." In fact, it was brought up by CMA staff on a number of occasions.

They were concerned with so many other things. They evaluated and reversed their 55 minute periods at the end of the first year. They continued to have social events, trips, follow-up with kids, a decision to keep the same children a third year, parent meetings and a no holdover policy. They didn't have the time to take on seriously integrating the trips into the curriculum.

Yet curriculum did change in math and science. The teachers believed something different was necessary. Changes occurred in individual classrooms. The Center offered monthly workshops with follow-up in the classroom and the opportunity to buy materials and supplies. In both these areas the teachers reported an increase in the amount of lab work and hands-on math. A math lab was designated and equipped using magnet grant money. They were supportive of trying different things and they had success. In language arts and social studies where there was no staff development and instruction remained mostly unchanged except for a voluntary lunch time art program.

In February of the second year, a member of the team received a Teacher Incentive Grant to take a teacher leader weekend course at Bank Street College. It had been offered to all though only Teacher A elected to participate.

Teacher A began to assume responsibility for meetings. She came in with formal agendas based on colleagues input and followed up. She brought them to closure. Discussions of leadership emerged and they agreed to rotating the leadership with Teacher A taking the first turn. By May, the former leader announced he was leaving to form a new team with three other teachers in the school. The team was consulted on the replacement. They accepted the

administrations choice of a teacher returning from sabbatical out of concern for the unknown possibilities and without interviewing her.

The third year began with a variety of policies in place. Teacher A remained as leader, but was pulled out of her teaching duties to be the magnet program coordinator. They all felt that it was time to address their stated theme, but more got in the way. Upon return from December break, the language arts teacher announced a need for a medical leave, effective February 1. They went to the principal and asked that they be allowed to recommend a replacement based on interviews and the candidates teaching in their school. She agreed. Six weeks and only four candidates later, they had a new teacher. Again, it took a lot of time, but this brought them closer together. It also prepared them for the next challenge, the "Chase Active Learning Grant".

The teacher leader saw the request for proposals and realized that it represented an opportunity to do an interdisciplinary curriculum. She went to the team. They spent three weeks thrashing out an idea that would be interdisciplinary, involve children in active learning and bring the community and the school closer together. Teacher A then wrote the grant. But most importantly the process brought the group together as a team.

The teachers had been given the opportunity to work together to plan a minischool. As with the New Futures program (Wehlage, 1992), there was deference to the teachers and their administration to build the vision. The opportunities to see new things which might shape their vision and policies included school visits and our meetings. They began by focusing on policy and structural change to improve the socialization of the children. These were built into their plans and adapted to reflect the needs of the teachers and their perception of the children's needs. Their vision was to be the result of their process of reflection (Fullan, 1993).

In the Active Learning Academy, at J 2.5 the planning process was initiated by a teacher who recruited a team of colleagues with the help of the Assistant Principal. They formed a mini-school that was specifically designed to meet the developmental needs of adolescents. They designed courses with titles that were different (see above, p. 9) and were committed to a truly different reality. There

was to be a minimum of one trip each month for the entire mini-school and a student run community newspaper printed on real newsprint by the local bilingual weekly. Their theme was active learning and they were determined to make school an active experience. They planned student internships in work settings, a peer tutoring program, an engineering course using a construction company's senior engineer as a partner in the teaching process, and an economics course using the resources of Junior Achievement.

There were two days of meetings during the summer to work out more of the details, plan the opening weeks of school, and generally work out the details. Teachers who were unsure of what they wanted to do got support from colleagues as specifics were worked out. School opened with "Active Learning" buttons and a commitment to a different experience for children.

First year successes included a smooth opening and teachers including activities in their classroom. Yoga became part of the science program and the engineering program began with the building of structures as an introduction to the study of building supports. Peer tutoring and internships began as part of "Active Learning Periods" and encountered problems in start up, but they did begin. The first trip to the Statue of Liberty occurred as planned. It was chosen because it was related to the "Communications and Culture" curriculum in genealogy.

By midyear kids were behaving better, engaged in authentic work, and teachers were beginning to view children's work holistically. Trips were scheduled and taken based on group decisions and with varying degrees of follow-up by teachers in their respective classrooms. As the year progressed, they began to measure success in improved discipline, enjoyment by children in their work and an ability to make greater demands on the children academically. Academic fragmentation was overcome as they involved children in projects. The administration was supportive and provided flexibility in curriculum and scheduling. The gnawing problem was trust within the group and in relationship to the rest of the school.

In early April, it came apart. Personality clashes intensified and the teacher leader and two others resigned from the Active Learning Academy. The remaining three team members met and decided they would continue their

work. They liked "the team feeling, the energy, the brainstorming, and the general level of mutual support." One veteran teacher felt "we are professionals and we are educators. We have a common concern for children."

The principal was still under pressure to restructure by the following September. As the year ended he placed all teachers in one of three mini-schools, including the Active Learning Academy, based on a preference survey. Some became reluctant volunteers.

The second year of Active Learning Academy was initially consumed with personality clashes, conflict over resources, and concern for discipline. The union chapter chair was monitoring things carefully. Yet with one medical leave and a lot of persistence, the team began to come together. They had three half days of meetings (at Bank Street College and the IBM Conference Center). Major conflicts occurred over tracking in math and assignment of paraprofessionals. The full staff had written a School Wide Project grant which did away with pull-out for math and provided about $200,000 for staff increases designed to bring down class size. They lowered the class sizes in general but also chose to allow for still smaller class size in the bottom track math classes and a paraprofessional to help that teacher. It was basically the pre-grant set up. Paras continued to be used in traditional ways regardless of the needs of the children and the other teachers in spite of efforts by a few to do otherwise. The team began to come together over their common concern for use of the paras to support instruction and contact with parents. It was the beginning of becoming a team.

Patterns

There were six patterns that we have noticed in our work with these two teams.

1. School leadership is committed to teacher empowerment.

2. Student membership in the school is important.

3. Voluntary teacher membership is essential.

4. Attention to professional growth is necessary.

5. Successful teams became colleagues.

6. Even when there is real empowerment, it may not have immediate credibility.

Patterns one through five appear to have proceeded in an evolutionary fashion. The Media Arts School is the clearer case. The Active Learning Academy shares these patterns though its history has been bumpier.

1. School Leadership is committed to teacher empowerment.

The three principals involved, one interim acting and two with 20 plus years experience, all were hard working and sincere. Yet none were charismatic or uniquely inspiring. All allowed their staff to take a good idea and carry it through. Their strength was that each trusted his teacher leaders and supported them in successfully carrying out the goals that served children. Most importantly, each worked as best they could at insulating their staff from external political and bureaucratic forces.

2. Student membership in the school is important.

Student membership in the school is an essential component of academic success (Wehlage, 1992). In the Media Arts School, they devoted the first year to this concern. Structures, policies and activities all grew out of the desire to prevent children from feeling lost and anonymous in the departmentalized and impersonal junior high school. They made it smaller, changed classes separately from the others in the building, and had a variety of social events for the children in their mini-schools. They felt this to be especially important for children who came out of unstable homes, and who were living in communities where substance abuse and crime were too common.

The Active Learning Academy used buttons and student advisory groups. Advisories were informal weekly informal small group meetings with children to discuss issues that were important to them. Active Learning Academy trips were another important tool used to build a sense of membership. Though some of the

trips were tied to a teacher's curriculum, the planning and uneven follow-up could lead you to question why they had to go as a group of 123. The teachers saw the trips as part of the process of achieving student membership in the school. They were also more explicit in the planning of the Active Learning Academy's recreational trips as having no purpose other than having a good time.

3. Voluntary teacher membership is essential.

In reforming an existing school, there is a tendency to want to change the entire building's practice immediately. This can result in the recruitment and inclusion of teachers who are not particularly interested in changing. In our work, the greatest resistance actually came from teachers who had long-standing positive reputations. They saw no reason to change even though children were not succeeding. The pattern we saw was that those groups where participants wanted to be part of a team were the most successful.

In the Active Learning Academy, the pace of change was greatly accelerated by the self selection process. Everyone on the team shared a view of the children and certain professional values. When the team was reorganized as part of the schoolwide restructuring effort some members were assigned to the Active Learning Academy. As a result, many of the second year meetings were consumed with concern for contractual compliance. Those who had been the original volunteers never thought about the limits of the union contract. The second year, one of the teachers assigned to the group counted minutes.

In the Media Arts School, the original five teachers were selected by the principal. By the third year of implementation, three had transferred out and been replaced with staff that wanted to be part of the team and/or had been interviewed by the other team members. All five team members felt that the process of hiring a colleague had been a critical event in the third year. Teacher A, the team leader, attributes their recent successes with now being a "group of volunteers. They all want to be here. There is a spirit of helping out." She feels they are now ready to do interdisciplinary teaching.

4. Attention to professional growth is necessary.

As the first year ended, we at the Center realized the need for professional development in various curriculum areas. The 55 minute period was being dropped because of a stated desire to better integrate the children with the larger school, but also because the teachers did not see an advantage in having extended periods. They felt the children had been successfully integrated into the mini-school community. Curriculum and instruction had not changed significantly. We decided that since all had expressed an interest in trying new things, the reason for not trying anything new might be a lack of knowledge; professional knowledge about new forms of pedagogy and cognitive science.

We therefore designed workshops that reflected the current research in math and science teaching and learning, but we made sure that their usefulness and transferability to their practice was clear. The teachers responded immediately. They challenged us and argued, but always found something useful they could try in their classrooms. Our presentations demanded they do things differently and so the time to challenge these ideas at the end of each workshop was as important as the follow-up support in their classrooms. The teachers had been working in a closed information system. They were not aware of the current literature in cognitive science or what it might look like in their classrooms. They then began to complain about not having resources. We gave them resources and they wanted to learn more.

We didn't feel we could give them answers, but rather we felt that they needed to construct site specific solutions based on the new information entering the system. In the Media Arts School by the end of year two, the math teacher was committed to teaching differently. In both schools, laboratory science increased. Cooperative learning was adapted for teaching and testing situations as well as the engineering program. In addition we offered the opportunity for teacher leadership training. One teacher participated in a weekend teacher leader course. Only then did she begin making agendas for meetings and following up.

So too with the student advisory program in the Active Learning Academy. The Active Learning Academy wanted to have student advisories, but didn't know

how. They participated in two days of professional development and began their own unique program the following year that incorporated their own professional experience and the training they had received. The enactment reflected the school's social norms (Popkewitz et al, 1982) and the teachers' site specific needs of the teachers. The new information was allowed into the system and resulted in changes in practice. Critical to each enactment was the provision of new information to open up a historically closed information system.

5. Successful teams became colleagues.

They "felt they could count on each other." They sought out advice from each other. Teachers began to "discuss, plan, conduct, analyze, evaluate and experiment with the business of teaching" (Little, 1982) together. They knew they could rely on each other whether it be in halls or in planning an activity or thinking about a child. The Media Arts School leader describes it as a "spirit of helping out". They came to know that they could request and get the staff development they wanted. They became open with each other and "listened to each other". They responded to each other's practice in a way that understood that an evaluation of practice is an evaluation of competence (Little, 1982). Their comments about each other's work were made in a supportive and helpful way. And all felt that having the "basic structure in place," the weekly meetings, gave them the opportunity to do their collegial work. The Active Learning Academy has not gotten this far... yet.

6. Even when there is real empowerment, it may not have immediate credibility.

In both schools, the principals were very supportive and flexible. Principals redirected resources where possible and provided bureaucratic tools like scheduling and preparation time to support the teachers. Requests for scheduling variances, inclusion of staff, grade span changes and limited funds were provided. Yet it is only recently that there is trust, and that is in the Media Arts School. Teacher A recalls the team feeling its way in its interaction with the new principal. Now, three years later, he is clear that no rational request will be

denied and that policies from the principal that do not serve the Media Arts School can be discussed and altered.

At Active Learning Academy there was also cooperation on scheduling and curricular variances. Yet there is still distrust that grows out of the handling of discipline and the history that has helped to define the culture of the school. Perhaps the distrust is best understood from the story of a thirty two year veteran of the system.

> It took me time to try cooperative learning. You have to understand that twenty nine years ago, I was reprimanded by a principal for having kids work in pairs. I learned. My lessons had to fit a basic format. A lesson is supposed to have a "Do Now", five minutes of motivation, a twenty minute presentation, and five to ten minutes of practice. This is a lot of brainwashing to unlearn.
>
> Teacher, Active Learning Academy

There is initially a consistent pattern of distrust of the administration that needs to be overcome.

Conclusions

Mini-schools can not exist in isolation. The district office and the principal must support the process with pro-active policies and clear support for the teacher's efforts. This means making time and resources available as well as insulating the participants from the political pressures of the environment. They must be allowed to bend rules and be convinced that they can count on long term support (three to five years minimum). Experienced teachers have usually been through a variety of program initiatives. They need to believe that this one is different.

Michael Apple warns of the intensification of teachers' work (Apple, 1992). It is an erosion of working conditions that is seen in a teachers lack of time to do anything, not even keep up on their profession. This time pressure leads to cutting corners and reliance on experts, including textbooks. In the case of teacher empowerment, it is easy to imagine teachers being so empowered that they don't have the time to develop new teaching strategies or for that matter,

maintain the policies and programs they have designed. In the case of school reform, there is therefore a need to provide time for teachers to become part of the reform or the technology of the reform will grind itself to a halt.

Perhaps the hardest thing to accept when trying to change existing schools is the irregularity and variety that results from the reform process. To be long lasting, reform must be a process that depends on teachers who voluntarily join with others to become colleagues. This desire for collegiality may attract many, but we must remember that teaching has been called a "lonely profession" and for too many years teachers have been able to close their doors and do what they wish. The result is therefore just as likely to be resistance as excitement from teachers given the opportunity to participate in shaping their future work. We found this most persistently true among teachers who feel they have historically been successful. Their response to problems was to want someone to somehow fix or remove specific children.

The result is therefore likely to be a wide range of designs, generated by teachers, and aimed at achieving the school's goals and/or consistency with the district's policies. We found that successful mini-schools can arise from self selected teams with various worthwhile plans. As a result, different schools within the school will create their own programs and culture. The locus of change will therefore no longer be the building. Rather it is the mini-school, staffed by professional teachers, involved in an ongoing reflective process of professional development, that will define the implementation of the reform.

References

Apple, M. (1992). The Text and Cultural Politics. Educational Researcher, 21(7), 4-11.

Cohen, M. (in press). Changing Schools From Within. The Journal of School Leadership.

Fullan, M. (1993). Innovation, Reform, and Restructuring Strategies. In G. Cawelti (Ed.) Challenges and Achievements of American Education (pp. 116-133). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Little, J.W.(1982)Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation: Workplace Conditions of School Success. American Educational Research Journal, 19(3), 325-340.

Popkewitz, T.S., Tabachnick, R., & Wehlage, G. (1982). The myth of educational reform. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Wehlage, G., Smith, G., & Lipman, P. (1992) Restructuring Urban Schools: The New Futures Experience. American Educational Research Journal, 29(1), 51-96.

Weick, K. (1973). Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. In Baldridge & Deal (Eds.), Dynamics of organizational change. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.